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May 11, 2006

The Honorable Matt Blunt
Governor, State of Missouri
State Capitol – Room 216-218
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Governor Blunt:

The right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy. When Missouri voters elected me Secretary of State, they charged me with the responsibility of making sure our elections are fair and that Missouri voters can have confidence their votes are counted. As a former Secretary of State and as our state's chief executive, you undoubtedly share my commitment to fair elections.

I am very concerned that SB1014 will keep a large number of Missourians, especially seniors and voters with disabilities, from exercising their constitutional right to vote and have their votes counted. **I strongly urge you to protect Missourians' right to vote and ask the legislature to reject this measure.**

Proponents of this legislation have argued the legislation is necessary to remedy *perceived* voter fraud. However, there is no evidence that such voter fraud actually exists or that this drastic measure would solve any existing problem in our elections system.

On August 14, 2002, the United States Department of Justice, under the direction of Attorney General John Ashcroft, issued a report on the 2000 General Election. The report concluded that the St. Louis City Election Board had "improperly removed voters from the registration rolls by placing voters on inactive status without notice and then failing to maintain procedures on Election Day adequate to ensure that those voters could reactivate their registration status and vote without undue delay."

In short, the problem with Missouri's 2000 General Election was not widespread voter impersonation or fraud, but that many Missourians were denied their right to vote.

In addition, following the November 2002 General Election, overseen by your administration, you commended the local election authorities for conducting an election that was "free of fraud." No new circumstances arose under the 2004 November election, also under your supervision, or since, which would necessitate making it harder for thousands of Missourians to vote.

As you know, Missouri's voter identification requirements are already among the strictest in the nation and have proven an effective safeguard to prevent wrongful voting.

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Rather than solve any real problem, Senate Bill 1014 will jeopardize the integrity of our elections by getting in the way of 170,000 Missourians' right to vote and have their votes counted.

Supporters of Senate Bill 1014 say the bill will allow seniors and voters with disabilities to cast provisional ballots. As you are aware, provisional ballots require voters to put their ballots in special envelopes and to give up some of their right to a private vote by signing the back of those envelopes. In addition, provisional ballots are not placed in the regular ballot box where every other vote goes and will only be counted if the local election authority determines the voter's signature matches the one they have on file, which in some cases can be decades old. You are also undoubtedly aware that in the 2004 General Election, when you were Secretary of State, over 8,000 provisional ballots were cast, but only 3,000 were actually counted.

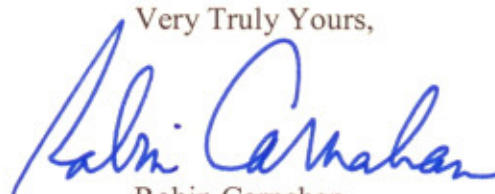
The proposition that up to 20 percent of seniors and disabled Missourians may be forced to cast provisional ballots in the next general election is completely unacceptable. The new identification requirements combined with the elimination of straight-ticket voting, an option used by 1,000,000 Missourians, will lead to confusion and longer lines at polling places. In addition, the increased number of provisional ballots will delay the certification of election results. Finally, the measure lacks adequate funding to inform voters of the new requirements or to help them comply. I hope you will agree that Missourians deserve better.

In recent days, I've been very disappointed that Republican members of the Missouri Senate appeared to play politics with this serious issue. Missourians expect and deserve more than partisan political games from their elected officials regarding something as fundamental and precious as their constitutional right to vote.

It is important to note that this measure has only had the support of one political party. As you are well aware, any legitimate election reform must have bi-partisan support to be successful.

I urge you to cut through partisan differences and stand up for protecting Missourians' right to vote by using your influence to ask legislators to reject this bill now. **Should this bill pass and make it to your desk, I hope you will protect Missourians' right to vote and veto Senate Bill 1014.**

If you have any questions, or if I can be of any assistance, please contact me directly at 573-751-1880.

Very Truly Yours,

Robin Carnahan
Secretary of State